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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/19/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [GG](#)  
SUBJECT: DAVID BAKRADZE TO BE NEW STATE MINISTER FOR  
CONFLICT RESOLUTION

REF: TBILISI 1702

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4(b)&(d).

#### Summary

1. (C) Officials in the State Ministry for Conflict Resolution have confirmed to us that Minister Merab Antadze is departing his post to return to the MFA, and he will be replaced by David Bakradze, currently Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration. Bakradze is a young, talented Saakashvili insider; the Embassy has worked well with him in the past. On other issues, State Ministry for Conflict Resolution officials believe we may finally be nearing the end of the convoluted water crisis in South Ossetia, but they do not believe an acceptable mechanism has yet been created to resume (or as they would prefer it, to replace) the Quadripartite Meetings (QPMs) on the security situation in Abkhazia. End Summary.

#### A New Occupant in the Hot Seat

2. (C) In a meeting at the State Ministry for Conflict Resolution July 19, Deputy State Minister for Conflict Resolution Ruslan Abashidze confided to us that his boss, Minister Antadze, would be returning to a position in the MFA, and would be replaced by prominent MP David Bakradze. Dimitri Manjavidze, the other Deputy State Minister for Conflict Resolution, seemed to second this in a chance encounter in the hall following the meeting, laughingly saying that he and Abashidze had apparently come to the end of their assignments. (Note: It appeared that this news had only recently reached the State Ministry, and it is possible that Manjavidze and Abashidze do not yet know if they will stay on. End Note.) Media outlets picked up the story shortly thereafter.

#### Who is David Bakradze?

3. (C) A fluent English speaker, Bakradze is an authority on NATO accession, the European Neighborhood Policy action plan, Russian base withdrawal, and Council of Europe commitments. He is considered one of the most active and influential pro-government leaders in Parliament, and has often traveled with leading MPs such as Giga Bokeria and Nika Rurua on trips to the U.S. In our dealings with him, he has been straightforward, honest, and very responsive.

4. (C) On conflict issues, Bakradze has a reputation as a voice of moderation. He was one of the key figures responsible for toning down a July 18, 2006 Parliamentary resolution calling on the government to withdraw the Russian peacekeepers from South Ossetia and Abkhazia, helping ensure it was not too radical. When Speaker Burjanadze has briefed the diplomatic corps on the creation of the temporary administrative unit in South Ossetia and other issues related

to the conflicts, Bakradze has typically taken the lead in the closed-door portion of the discussion. Bakradze accompanied the head of the temporary administrative unit, Dmitry Sanakoyev, on his recent visit to Brussels.

15. (U) Bio of David Bakradze:

DOB: July 1, 1972

Marital Status: Married with one child

Languages: Georgian, English, and Russian

Professional Experience:

-- Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration; since April 2004

-- various positions at the National Security Council, including Head of Security Office, Head of Foreign Political, Security, and Conflicts Department, and Head of Political Security Department, 2002-2004

-- various positions at the MFA, including Deputy, then Head of the Armament-Disarmament Control Office, and Deputy Director of the Military-Political Department, 1997-1998, 2000-2002

-- Lab Assistant, Georgian Technical University, 1991-1992

Education:

-- PhD in Physics and Mathematics

-- Post-graduate studies, Department of General Physics, Technical University of Georgia, 1994-1998

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-- Georgian Institute of Public Affairs, Master of Public Administration, 1996

-- Georgian Technical University, Department of Physics and Engineering, Engineer of Electronic Equipment, 1994

A Light at the End of the Water Pipeline?

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16. (SBU) On other topics, Abashidze said a joint team of engineers had inspected the South Ossetian water pipeline July 17 (reftel), and found problems in both the Ossetian and Georgian areas. At Andisi, the northernmost point that the South Ossetians permitted to be inspected, the pipe was only half-full, suggesting problems in the separatist-controlled north near Java. At the same time, however, the team found approximately 15 holes in the pipe near Sveri, in the Georgian enclave. Inspectors also confirmed that an irrigation canal near Ossetian-controlled Tbeti had been blocked, preventing water from reaching the Georgian village of Nikozi and surrounding areas. Abashidze said the Georgians wanted to follow through on agreements to allow engineers to repair the problems without politicizing them, and he expressed frustration that Joint Peacekeeping Force (JPKF) commander Kulakhmetov had issued a public statement about the holes in the pipe.

17. (SBU) Manjavidze subsequently informed us of a just-completed agreement to start repairs of the water pipe and the irrigation canal on July 20, with each side's workers observed by the other side and the OSCE, without the presence of the JPKF. He expressed hope that this was the beginning of the end of the long-running water controversy.

18. (SBU) Abashidze also showed us a huge stack of envelopes that he intended to deliver to the de facto authorities -- invitations to individuals in Tskhinvali, including South Ossetian negotiator Chochiev and other de facto officials, to take part in consultations on the details of autonomy for South Ossetia.

## Problems Remain with Gali Meetings

¶9. (C) Abashidze said that the Georgians were not happy with the draft terms of reference for the resumption of QPMs in the Gali district of Abkhazia, stressing that the terms would keep the CIS peacekeepers in a dominant position in the talks. He said the Georgian side was eager to resume meetings on the security situation in Gali, but Georgia wanted it to be an essentially bilateral format between the Georgians and the Abkhaz, not a repeat of the old four-sided mechanism. He said the CIS peacekeepers could still have a role, but it would be more in the nature of an expert on security matters, rather than as an equal (or leading) party on political topics.

## Comment

¶10. (C) David Bakradze shares the biography and qualities typical of the post-Rose Revolution leadership in Georgia: bright, multilingual, and hard-working, he first gained attention in the late Shevardnadze period (like Saakashvili himself) and then made himself a trusted insider in a new government of young men in a hurry to transform Georgia into a modern, democratic state. He should bring real political muscle in Tbilisi and an infusion of energy to the conflict resolution process.

TEFFT